



MICHAEL BENNET
U.S. SENATOR *for* COLORADO

NGO Support for the GORP Act

1. American Whitewater
2. Backcountry Hunters and Anglers & Trout Unlimited
3. Colorado Wildlands Project
4. Gunnison Offroad Alliance of Trailriders (GOATs)
5. Gunnison Sno-Trackers
6. Gunnison Stockgrowers
7. Gunnison Trails
8. High Country Conservation Advocates
9. Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory
10. Sustainable Tourism and Outdoor Recreation (STOR) Committee
11. The Access Fund
12. The Conservation Alliance
13. The Wilderness Society
14. Upper Gunnison River Water Conservation District
15. Western States Ranches
16. Wilderness Workshop



September 25, 2024

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Bennet,

The Access Fund writes to express our strong support for the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection (GORP) Act. This well-balanced legislation effectively integrates appropriate conservation protections with recreation management designations, ensuring high-quality outdoor experiences while preserving the regional economy.

The Access Fund is America's national advocacy organization whose mission keeps climbing areas open and conserves the climbing environment. A 501(c)3 non-profit supporting and representing over 7 million climbers nationwide in all forms of climbing—rock climbing, ice climbing, mountaineering, and bouldering—the Access Fund has over 10,000 members and nearly 150 local affiliate organizations. Colorado is one of the Access Fund's largest member states.

The Access Fund has a long history of advocating for public lands, including our stalwart support for your CORE Act, which was developed through extensive community collaboration that is essential for effective and durable public land conservation and recreation management. We understand that the GORP Act was crafted similarly, with consultation from local stakeholders including the Gunnison Valley Climbers Association.

Climbing has been a longstanding activity in the Gunnison Valley, dating back to the 1970s. The region offers a range of climbing experiences, from world-class challenging routes to cliffs suitable for beginner climbers. As you know, fixed anchors are essential tools for climbers to safely navigate these climbing areas, allowing for greater public access to some of the most stunning vertical landscapes. However, if key climbing areas fall within a new wilderness designations, future climbing opportunities and the replacement of aging hardware could be severely restricted.

We greatly appreciate your adjustment of the East Cement Creek Wilderness boundary to exclude vital climbing zones, which are highly valued by the local community. These areas will still enjoy strong protections under other provisions of the GORP Act, while preserving the potential for ongoing route development. Thank you.

We commend you and your staff for your diligence in considering and accommodating various existing and historic uses, including rock climbing. The Access Fund stands ready to assist in advancing the GORP Act through Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Erik Murdock". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Erik Murdock
Access Fund Deputy Director of Programs, Policy and Government Affairs



Kestrel Kunz
Southern Rockies Protection Director
kestrel@americanwhitewater.org
PO Box 753
Crested Butte, CO 81224
802.299.8405

September 4, 2024

The Honorable Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bennet,

American Whitewater is proud to support the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection ("GORP") Act. The GORP Act will achieve proper management and protection of public lands in Gunnison County, including highly cherished whitewater rivers that support a robust recreation economy and sustain life in the surrounding landscapes.

American Whitewater is a national 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with a mission to protect and restore our nation's whitewater resources and enhance opportunities to enjoy them safely. American Whitewater represents the interests of river enthusiasts across the nation, including 50,000 supporters, 7,000 dues-paying members and 80 local affiliate club members. As conservation-minded whitewater recreationists, we place a high value on protecting naturally functioning river ecosystems, including their fish and wildlife, geomorphic processes, and potential to provide clean and safe drinking water.

Many of our American Whitewater members and supporters either live in Gunnison County or travel to the county to boat. The whitewater boating community in Gunnison County, in Colorado, and from across the country highly value the rivers and public lands in Gunnison County. The landscapes within the GORP Act include world renowned and locally treasured whitewater rivers, such as the East River, the Slate River, Daisy Creek (i.e., Poverty Gulch), the Taylor River, and Oh-Be-Joyful Creek. The Taylor River generates over \$4 million dollars through commercial rafting and the Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forest has recognized the high quality of the river recreational opportunities on many of these rivers. Some of these opportunities require motorized vehicle access, which currently exists, and once on the water, kayaking, rafting, paddle boarding, canoeing, and other forms of paddling is a low-impact, wilderness compliant, outdoor recreation activity, making these activities compatible with both the proposed Special Management Areas and Wilderness Areas in the GORP Act.

Oftentimes, whitewater recreation is overlooked by federal land managers even though it provides high quality outdoor recreation opportunities for locals and visitors alike. Unlike activities on trails and roads, there is not always evidence that whitewater boating is an existing activity and it is critical that whitewater resources on the GORP Act landscape are protected and managed for. We look forward to working with Senator Bennet, local stakeholders, and federal

land management agencies to ensure that whitewater recreation is properly managed for in the GORP Act landscapes.

American Whitewater appreciates your dedicated leadership to protect and improve management of our public lands through the GORP Act. We look forward to supporting you as you advance the GORP Act through Congress and we are dedicated to helping ensure that the subsequent management plans amendments for these areas are robust.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Kestrel Kunz in black ink.

Kestrel Kunz
Protection Director
Southern Rockies Program
American Whitewater

September 13, 2024

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Bennet,

The Colorado Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (BHA) and Colorado Trout Unlimited (TU) are writing to express our dedicated support for the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection (GORP) Act, which is set to be introduced to Congress in September 2024. This legislation represents a meaningful and much-needed step forward in protecting Colorado's public lands, enhancing hunting and fishing opportunities, and conserving critical fish and wildlife habitat in the Gunnison Basin.

From the beginning of the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative (GPLI), your leadership has been pivotal in ensuring that local voices and stakeholder input were prioritized. Your commitment to public land conservation has resulted in a balanced, well-crafted proposal that not only safeguards the rich natural resources of the Gunnison Basin but also protects the long-standing traditions of hunting, angling, ranching and outdoor recreation that are vital to Colorado's outdoor heritage.

The GORP Act is essential for stabilizing and conserving fish and wildlife habitat at a scale that truly matters for this region. It would conserve important big game habitats, including those used by elk and mule deer, and it protects cold-water fisheries that are critical for native and wild trout populations. By designating wilderness areas, special management zones, and wildlife conservation areas, this legislation would ensure that future generations of hunters and anglers have access to wild, backcountry public lands, and the thriving fish and wildlife populations that depend on these protected areas.

In an era when we are witnessing threats to the very idea of public lands in other states, such as Utah, and constant uncertainty within federal land management agencies, the GORP Act would provide a much-needed anchor for public land conservation in Colorado. It reinforces the importance of fish and wildlife habitat, sustainable land stewardship, and recreation management oriented around conservation. This legislation also serves as a strong defense against any efforts to privatize or reduce access to these cherished public lands, ensuring that they remain protected for hunting, fishing, and other outdoor pursuits.

Your unwavering support for protecting Colorado's public lands while ensuring recreational access is deeply appreciated by BHA, TU, and the hundreds of thousands of hunters and anglers we represent both in Colorado and across the United States. We are confident that

the GORP Act will provide lasting protections for the Gunnison Basin and beyond, preserving its backcountry for hunters, anglers, and all who treasure the natural beauty of this region.

We stand ready to support the passage of this critical legislation and look forward to continuing to work with you and your office to see the GORP Act successfully enacted into law.

Sincerely,

Colorado Chapter of Backcountry Hunters & Anglers
Colorado Trout Unlimited

COLORADO
WILDLANDS
PROJECT



September 18, 2024

The Honorable Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bennet:

The Colorado Wildlands Project is proud to support the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection ("GORP") Act. The Colorado Wildlands Project works to protect wild public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). We are dedicated to the conservation, climate resilience, and equitable management of our public lands. We have spent several years conducting inventories of wildlands in western Colorado and working closely with partners across the Colorado Plateau to rally support for public land protections.

The Gunnison Basin is a remarkable region that showcases the diverse ecosystems and outdoor experiences that make Colorado unique. BLM lands in and around the region are home to some of Colorado's most important wildland values, including critical wildlife habitat, prized recreational opportunities, irreplaceable cultural resources, and healthy watersheds that serve local communities and the larger Colorado River Basin. The Colorado Wildlands Project works to maintain updated inventories of BLM wildlands on BLM lands across Colorado, and has identified numerous areas in the Gunnison field office worthy of protection as designated wilderness or similar protective management. BLM has identified over 81,000 acres of lands with wilderness characteristics in the Gunnison Field Office, and we strongly support the GORP Act's proposal to add permanent protections for some of these areas, either as designated wilderness or as other types of special management areas. In particular, we strongly support the proposed additions to the West Elk and Powderhorn Wilderness Areas, as well as the proposed increased protections for important BLM lands at McIntosh Mountain and Cabin Creek. Gunnison County contains irreplaceable BLM wildlands and we are supportive of the protections proposed for these BLM lands in this bill.

The GORP Act is the product of years of collaboration among local stakeholders and broad community input. We appreciate your dedicated leadership and support for the collaborative process that is reflected in the GORP Act. We look forward to supporting you as you advance the GORP Act through Congress.

Sincerely,

Scott Braden
Director
Colorado Wildlands Project
scott@cowildlands.org

September 9, 2024

The Honorable Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510



Dear Senator Bennet:

The Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association is proud to support the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection ("GORP") Act. The GORP Act is the product of years of collaboration among local stakeholders and broad community input. The result is balanced legislation that will help sustain the incredible values of key federal public lands in and around Gunnison County for ranchers, wildlife, water users, recreationists, and communities for generations to come.

CBMBA believes that recreation engenders authentic connections to the environment and is a tool for environmental awareness. CBMBA works to balance recreation with conservation, minimizing the environmental impacts of overuse and mis-use, while also providing education and outreach to all users. CBMBA created the Crested Butte Conservation Corps (CBCC) in 2017, a full time seasonal trail care and stewardship crew. We work closely alongside federal land agencies and managers to steward public lands. With your support and leadership of the GORP Act, we aim to work alongside federal agencies further still, to help steward the progressive and sensible protections and provisions of the GORP act. We believe the GORP Act provides for vital public lands health and sustainability, for generations to come.

CBMBA appreciates your years of dedicated leadership and support for the collaborative process that is reflected in the GORP Act. We look forward to supporting you as you advance the GORP Act through Congress and pass-on its important public lands legacy to future generations.

Sincerely,

David Ochs – Executive Director
Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association - *Since 1983*
dave@cbmba.org - 970.349.7324



September 17, 2024

The Honorable Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bennet:

The Gunnison Valley OHV Alliance of Trail Riders (GOATs) is pleased to express our support for the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection ("GORP") Act. The GORP Act is the product of years of collaboration among local stakeholders and broad community input. The result is balanced legislation that will help sustain the incredible values of key federal public lands in and around Gunnison County not only for the OHV community, but for ranchers, wildlife, water users, recreationists, and residents for generations to come.

GOATs have been a member of the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative throughout the multi-year collaborative process that led to the GORP Act. Based on the principles of transparency, cooperation, and respect for the values of all stakeholders, every group at the table played a critical role in crafting what is truly a community-based proposal. We very much appreciate being included in the GPLI and the opportunities that provided GOATs to play a direct role in the development of the GORP Act. The result is a balanced bill that will allow motorized recreation and trail stewardship in and around the Gunnison Basin to flourish.

GOATs appreciate your years of dedicated leadership and support for the collaborative process that is reflected in the GORP Act. We look forward to supporting you as you advance the GORP Act through Congress and pass on its important public land's legacy to future generations.

Sincerely,



Geoff Heller

President

Gunnison Valley OHV Alliance of Trailriders

Gunnison Valley OHV Alliance of Trailriders • Gunnison/Crested Butte CO • gunnibgoats@gmail.com



September 18, 2024

The Honorable Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bennet:

Gunnison County Sno Trackers is pleased to support the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection ("GORP") Act. Sno Trackers has worked for decades to support high quality snowmobiling opportunities on the incredible public lands in the Gunnison Basin region. We greatly appreciate the opportunity to participate in the collaborative Gunnison Public Lands Initiative (GPLI) since its inception. The GORP Act reflects the GPLI's commitment to cooperation, open dialogue, compromise and respect, and the result is a balanced bill that will chart a future for the public lands in and around Gunnison County where world-class snowmobiling will continue to flourish.

Thank you for including Sno Trackers in the GPLI and for your and your staff's years of collaborative hard work in bringing the GPLI agreements to Congress. We stand ready to support you as you advance the GORP Act through Congress and pass on its important legacy to public lands users of all kinds.

Sincerely,

Bob Dawson
President
Gunnison County Sno Trackers



Established 1894

GUNNISON COUNTY STOCKGROWERS ASSOCIATION, INC.

P.O. Box 1711 ♦ Gunnison, Colorado 81230

September 13, 2024

The Honorable Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bennet:

The Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association is pleased to support the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection ("GORP") Act. The Stockgrowers were active participants in the community collaboration known as the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative ("GPLI"), which led to the development of the GORP Act. Sustaining the rich ranching heritage in and around the Gunnison Basin was one of the key goals of the GPLI, and the result is balanced legislation that respects and protects the County's rich ranching heritage, ensures that designated areas can continue to be used for grazing and historical ranching activities, and will help improve recreation management and watershed protection.

In particular, we appreciate that the GORP Act protects current and future grazing. The legislation directs the BLM and Forest Service to continue to administer grazing permits and leases according to existing law and policy in all special designations. The agencies will manage the GORP Act's Wilderness designations according to the Congressional Grazing Guidelines, which were first drafted by ranchers in Gunnison County in the late 1970s and which clearly state that "there shall be no curtailment of grazing permits or privileges in an area simply because it is designated as wilderness". These and other provisions of the GORP Act reflect the significant input of the Stockgrowers and the common ground the GPLI found among stakeholders.

The Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association appreciates your years of dedicated leadership and support for the collaborative process that is reflected in the GORP Act. We look forward to supporting you as you advance the GORP Act through Congress and work to ensure that Gunnison County ranchers can continue to prosper in the Gunnison Basin for years to come.

Sincerely,

Andy Spann, President
Gunnison County Stockgrowers' Association



September 10, 2024

The Honorable Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bennet,

Gunnison Trails is proud to support the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection (GORP) Act. Gunnison Trails is a nonprofit, trail advocacy organization that has been a proud member of the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative (GPLI) working group since its inception in 2016. The GORP Act is the product of years of collaboration among local stakeholders and broad and diverse community input. The result is balanced legislation that protects public lands in Gunnison County for generations to come.

Like many rural communities across the mountain west, the Gunnison Valley has witnessed a prolific increase in outdoor recreation and public land use over the last decade. Gunnison County has been proactive in dealing with the impacts from this increased use and works closely with our federal and state land managers, municipalities and local nonprofit organizations to manage and sustain our public lands. The GPLI working group is one such product of this proactive approach, and it has wrestled with a variety of challenging issues, from new Wilderness designations to a suite of Special Management Areas that are tailored to meet the specific needs of a particular area. The challenge posed by Senator Bennet at the beginning of this process to create a plan that meets the needs and desires of a broad and diverse group of stakeholders meant listening to and relating to other group members, and compromising when the end result benefits the greater good for our public lands and the future generations that will inherit them. We are excited to the degree recreation, specifically trail-based recreation, was considered in the plan. While not overtly supporting or calling out specific future trails, the plan leaves room for the consideration of these important trails and trail connectors that would provide for a better recreation experience and better connectivity. The higher level of management specific to each Special Management Area allows for a more focused and detailed management approach in the face of climate change, increasing use and greater impacts.

We feel strongly the GORP Act will protect and enhance our public lands here in Gunnison County while meeting the future needs of our community and the diverse stakeholders that worked tirelessly on this plan. Thank you for the opportunity to support the GORP Act and we appreciate all of the time and energy you have invested into this important collaborative process.

Sincerely,

Tim Kugler
Executive Director, Gunnison Trails



September 19, 2024

The Honorable Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bennet,

High Country Conservation Advocates (HCCA) is proud to support the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection (GORP) Act. HCCA is the grassroots non-profit dedicated to protecting the health, integrity, and beauty of the public lands, waters, and wildlife of Colorado's Gunnison Country and has been a proud member of the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative (GPLI) working group since its inception in 2016. As you are aware, the GORP Act is the product of years of collaboration among local stakeholders and broad and diverse community input. The result is balanced legislation that protects public lands for generations to come.

The GORP Act is the protection this community desires for our adjacent public lands in Gunnison County. In the process of drafting this legislation, two million acres of public lands have been analyzed and dissected for over a decade for factors like wildlife habitat, recreation, roads, trails, and grazing to create management areas and a map that everyone from ranchers to snowmobilers to mountain bikers to conservationists has agreed to. The GORP Act is how public lands protections should be created – the details were hashed out locally by public lands users, then supported and raised up by our County Board of Commissioners (for you) to draft into legislation for Federally owned public lands. The GORP Act looks at the big picture to address critical wildlife areas that don't currently have long term protections in place; the Act designates Recreation Management Areas where large amounts of public use take place; and the Act will fill in the nooks and crannies of our public lands that might not have been considered in the past, yet are still in pristine condition and worthy of protection. The GORP Act does all this while not really changing what we are currently allowed to do on our adjacent public lands. The GORP Act will be the designations and protections this community needs moving forward to protect our most valuable asset – adjacent public lands.

HCCA appreciates your years of dedicated leadership and support for the collaborative process that is reflected in the GORP Act. We look forward to supporting you as you advance the GORP Act through Congress and pass-on its important public lands legacy to future generations.
Sincerely,

Jon Hare
Advocacy Director, High Country Conservation Advocates



August 15, 2024

The Honorable Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Office building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Bennet:

The Rocky Mountain Biological Laboratory ("RMBL") supports the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection ("GORP") Act. Located in Gothic, CO, RMBL provides logistical support for scientists and students, including access to living quarters, research laboratories, and protected research sites for one of the largest annual migrations of field biologists from across the United States and around the world. RMBL focuses on the importance of preserving and providing access to the unique historical data about the local ecosystems, mostly from and about public lands, that has been compiled over more than a century of research in and around Gunnison County. As scientists address ever more sophisticated questions about a dynamic world, RMBL is a vital resource for discovering nature's fundamental ecological and evolutionary processes.

Gunnison County's public lands play a critical role in the advancement of that science. A range of federal agencies, including the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy, and the National Institutes of Health, collectively spend more than \$10 million annually for research that depends at least in part on fieldwork on and around public lands in Gunnison County. Collectively this research represents one of the nation's largest financial investments in field research conducted in a single region. Because of the infrastructure support for this research, and the value of past research to future research, the importance of Gunnison County to the nation's scientific portfolio is likely to increase. In addition to serving as a platform for investigating biological, hydrological, and geological processes, this research informs our understanding of food security, water quality and quantity, human disease, and air quality.

The value of research in the Gunnison Basin depends in large part upon access to a portfolio of ecosystem types on public lands. Research on public lands is managed within the context of multiple use and depends on thoughtful land management that includes long-term protections for research sites and the landscapes on which they often depend. Included are the many existing and proposed wilderness areas in an around Gunnison County, all of which contain significant features of scientific value. For these and many other reasons, access to and protection of public lands for scientific research should remain a critical part of public land management in Gunnison County. The GORP Act will significantly advance that kind of thoughtful land management, including through the designation of the Rocky Mountain Scientific Research and Education Area, an area around RMBL that includes an extraordinary density of important long-term research sites.

R M B L

SCIENCE. OUTSIDE.

RMBL greatly appreciates the many opportunities it had to participate in the transparent and collaborative approach through which the legislation was established. Thank you for your longstanding support for this community-driven proposal, and please let us know how RMBL can support you in advancing the GORP Act through Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ian Billick". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Ian Billick
Executive Director



Attn: Senator Michael Bennet
Cesar E. Chavez Memorial Building
1244 Speer Boulevard
Denver, CO 80204

July 13, 2022

Dear Senator Michael Bennet,

The Sustainable Tourism & Outdoor Recreation (STOR) Committee heartily endorses the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection (GORP) Act. The GORP Act is the culmination of close to a decade of discussion and hard-won compromise by the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative (GPLI) and community to envision a future for local public lands. The Gunnison Country is world class and being out on the land is a way of life for our community. There is also a shared community concern for the future vitality of these lands. The GORP Act is our opportunity to strike an appropriate balance between wilderness, recreational, wildlife, ecological, economic, scientific and cultural values our communities hold dear now and into the future.

The STOR Committee is centered in the Gunnison Valley and works across Gunnison County. At 3,200 square miles, the county is the fifth largest by land area in the state. The County includes approximately 2 million acres of public lands, almost 82% of the total area of the county. The County is home to a National Recreation Area, the mighty Gunnison River, 7 Wilderness Areas, and the Gunnison Field Office of the BLM which manages the popular Hartman Rocks Recreation Area. A new public lands center is under construction, and Western Colorado University based in Gunnison is a hub for environmental management and recreation research that is made possible by the outdoor learning laboratory of public lands here. The University launched a first-of-its-kind Master of Business Administration Outdoor Industry program, which is driving innovation in the industry. Ranching and associated public lands grazing is a legacy that fuels our local economy and culture.

The GORP Act thoughtfully considers these different values and natural amenities that provide for our way of life. Through the work of GPLI, which has crossover representation with the STOR Committee, the Gunnison community has developed a thorough, consensus-driven plan that will help inform how public lands should be managed into the future with a vast array of perspectives. We believe the work of the Board of County Commissioners and GPLI has resulted in a shared vision for public lands management in Gunnison County.

Sincerely,

Kevin Alexander, STOR Committee Chair

Dave Ochs, Crested Butte Mountain Bike Association (At-large)
Hannah Cranor, At-large
Hedda Peterson, Gunnison Metropolitan Recreation District
Ian Billick, Town of Crested Butte
Jake Jones, Crested Butte Land Trust (At-large)
Joellen Fonken, Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District
John Norton, Tourism and Prosperity Partnership
Jonathan Houck, Gunnison County
Kevin Alexander, Hunters & Anglers (At-large)
Kimberly Schappert, At-large
Mallory Logan, City of Gunnison
Mark Voegeli, Crested Butte Mountain Resort
Matt Reed, High Country Conservation Advocates (At-large)
Roman Kolodziej, Town of Mt. Crested Butte
Scott Borden, Western Colorado University
Steve Guerrieri, Gunnison County Stockgrowers Association
Tim Kugler, Gunnison Trails (At-large)

*State and federal agency representatives on the STOR Committee abstain from this letter of support in order to adhere to agency legislative process.

About the STOR Committee

The STOR Committee is a community coalition, created by the Gunnison County Board of Commissioners to improve and maintain tourism and outdoor recreation in a manner that is sustainable (environmentally, socially, and financially) and aligns with community values. The committee is structured to be a wide-ranging group that acts thoughtfully, efficiently, and proactively to address negative impacts and develops unique approaches to create a sustainable tourism economy and outdoor recreation experience while preserving the natural resources of Gunnison County.



The Honorable Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

September 12, 2024

Dear Senator Bennet:

The Conservation Alliance enthusiastically supports the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection ("GORP") Act. The Conservation Alliance works to protect outdoor spaces and wild places through the collective power of our more than 260 member companies from outdoor and related industries. Each year, our member companies select community-focused grantees across North America who are committed to creating a healthy, livable planet for all. The Conservation Alliance was proud to support the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative through our grant-making process and is proud to support the results as they are embodied in the GORP Act.

The GORP Act is the product of years of collaboration among the members of the GPLI and of broad local and regional community and stakeholder input. The result is legislation that will help sustain the incredible natural, recreational, and economic values of key federal public lands in and around the Gunnison Basin, one of America's outdoor treasures. The GORP Act will, in turn, help to sustain and grow the local, regional, and national outdoor and related businesses that these public lands support.

The Conservation Alliance appreciates your years of dedicated leadership and support for the collaborative GPLI process and for reflecting its work in the GORP Act. We look forward to supporting you as you advance the GORP Act through Congress.

Sincerely,



Shoren Brown
Vice President, Public Affairs
The Conservation Alliance



Rebecca Gillis
Senior Director, Advocacy and Outreach
The Conservation Alliance





August 29, 2024

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senate
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bennet:

On behalf of The Wilderness Society (TWS), I write to express our strong support for the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection ("GORP") Act. TWS was founded in 1935 and our mission is uniting people to protect America's wild places. The GORP Act is the result of years of local collaboration that has truly united communities across the region and the state to protect key public lands in and around the Gunnison Basin for clean water, wildlife, recreation, ranching, scientific research, wilderness, and other benefits for generations to come.

The GORP Act embodies the communities' long-term vision for sustaining the public lands in and around the Gunnison Basin and, in the process, sustaining the culture, economies, and values of the communities themselves. As a member of the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative, TWS was proud to contribute to the inclusive community collaboration, compromise, and public engagement that is reflected in the GORP Act.

When enacted, the GORP Act will establish a science-based landscape conservation portfolio that will help focus management and protect important landscapes. For example, the GORP Act will help protect Kebler Pass and its incredible Aspen stand that is one of the largest organisms on earth; critical habitat for the world's largest remaining Gunnison Sage-grouse population and habitat; long-term ecological research sites that represent one of the nation's largest financial investments in field research conducted in a single region; critical watersheds that provide drinking water for communities like Paonia, the City of Gunnison, and Crested Butte, not to mention millions throughout much of the Colorado River Basin; and some of Colorado's most spectacular vistas, including Star Peak, Oh Be Joyful Creek, the Pinnacles, the Taylor Creek Canyon, Cobbler Ridge, the Castles, and many others.

Thank you for your years of dedicated support and leadership for this effort. We stand ready to support you in moving it through Congress.

Sincerely,

Scott Miller
Senior Director, Southwest Region



Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District

210 West Spencer Avenue, Suite A • Gunnison, Colorado 81230
Telephone (970) 641-6065 • www.ugrwd.org

The Honorable Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

September 3, 2024

Dear Senator Bennet,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Upper Gunnison River Water Conservancy District, which encompasses most of Gunnison County and parts of Hinsdale and Saguache Counties. The District's mission is to be an active leader in all issues affecting the water resources of the Upper Gunnison River Basin. At its regular meeting on August 26, the Board voted to support the introduction and passage of the *Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection Act*.

Our representatives have actively participated in Gunnison County's Public Lands Initiative since its inception, and we believe that the GORP Act represents balanced protection of the multiple values that our public lands offer, and in particular, our watersheds. The explicit protection of valid existing rights is important to our water users, and we especially appreciate the District's inclusion as a collaborator in restoration activities – an endeavor the District has been diligently engaged in for many years.

Thank you for your efforts on behalf of the citizens of Gunnison County.

Sincerely,

Stacy McPhail, President

September 20, 2024

The Honorable Michael Bennet
United States Senator
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Bennet:

We are writing to express our support for the Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection (GORP) Act, including for the proposed additions to the Uncompahgre Wilderness, which overlap a portion of Grand Headwaters and Western States Ranches grazing operations. We run a large, grassfed organic beef operation headquartered in and around Delta, Montrose and Ridgway, Colorado. We run about 4,000 head of cattle on a mixture of Forest Service, BLM, and private lands totaling over 200,000 acres, including some public lands included in the GORP Act.

Our cows share their mountain and desert pastures with a profusion of wildlife, including Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, bighorn sheep, pronghorn, black bears, Merriam's wild turkeys, and Dusky grouse. All of our operations are conducted with the goals of increasing ecological sustainability and compatibility with other animal species and habitats. In the area covered by the GORP Act, we hold the grazing permits for the US Forest Service Big Cimarron and Green Mountain grazing allotments, each of which includes portions of the additions to the Uncompahgre Wilderness proposed in the GORP Act. We have worked within portions of the Uncompahgre Wilderness for years.

We appreciate the important public values that designated Wilderness protects and that wilderness is compatible with grazing and the important benefits it provides to the community and the broader public. This is special, beautiful country, which is one of the reasons we appreciate holding the permits for our allotments there. We want to keep it that way, and the GORP Act would help accomplish that.

We also appreciate the positive discussions we have had with representatives of the Gunnison Public Lands Initiative (GPLI) in this process. We support the commitment of the GPLI, which is reflected throughout the GORP Act, to protect local public lands, enhance a strong and sustainable local economy, and support historic uses—including ranching—of public lands in and around Gunnison County.

Please let us know how we can help further to support of the GORP Act as it makes its way through the U.S. Congress.

Sincerely,



Michael H. Higuera
Vice President
Grand Headwaters and Western States Ranches



September 10, 2024

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The Honorable Michael Bennet
261 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Bennet:

Wilderness Workshop has been working to protect the wilderness, water, and wildlife of western Colorado's public lands for nearly sixty years. Our work began with the efforts to double the size of the Maroon Bells-Snowmass Wilderness Area and to designate the West Elks and Raggeds Wilderness Areas, among others. These are some of Colorado's most popular and ecologically-important wilderness areas. The Gunnison Outdoor Resources Protection ("GORP") Act would expand all three of these wilderness areas as well as increase protections for other public lands, providing critical conservation benefits amidst our changing climate and improving recreational opportunities and management.

With these and other important provisions, the GORP Act will help chart a sustainable course for key public lands, wildlife and communities in and around the Gunnison Basin. From watershed protection in places like the Whetstone Headwaters Special Management Area, to wildlife protection in places like the Pinnacles Wildlife Conservation Area, to improved recreation management in places like the Double Top Recreation Management Area, and the oil and gas withdrawals around Paonia, the GORP Act will help protect the region's water, wildlife, recreation, and agriculture for generations to come. In particular, we are thrilled to see additional wilderness protections for the Star Peak, Ashcroft and Treasure Mountain areas. The Star Peak and Ashcroft areas are valued by Roaring Fork Valley residents and visitors for the opportunities they provide for quiet backcountry recreation. Treasure Mountain is beloved by Crystal Valley residents and serves as an important wildlife linkage between the Maroon Bells-Snowmass and Raggeds Wilderness Areas.

Wilderness Workshop also appreciates the many opportunities we and the public had to participate in the development of the bill. The strong collaboration among local stakeholders and broad community-input is reflected in the broad support for this balanced bill. For these reasons, Wilderness Workshop proudly supports the GORP Act. We look forward to supporting you as you advance the GORP Act through Congress.

Sincerely,

Will Roush

Executive Director, Wilderness Workshop